

Sunday 4th August 2019

Trinity 7

Green Proper 13



Collect

Lord of all power and might, the author and giver of all good things: graft in our hearts the love of your name, increase in us true religion, nourish us with all goodness, and of your great mercy keep us in the same; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen**

Ecclesiastes 1:1-2, 12-14; 2:18-23 English Standard Version (ESV)

The Vanity of Wisdom

1 ² Vanity^[a] of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity.

¹² I the Preacher have been king over Israel in Jerusalem. ¹³ And I applied my heart^[b] to seek and to search out by wisdom all that is done under heaven. It is an unhappy business that God has given to the children of man to be busy with. ¹⁴ I have seen everything that is done under the sun, and behold, all is vanity^[c] and a striving after wind.^[d]

The Vanity of Toil

2 ¹⁸ I hated all my toil in which I toil under the sun, seeing that I must leave it to the man who will come after me, ¹⁹ and who knows whether he will be wise or a fool? Yet he will be master of all for which I toiled and used my wisdom under the sun. This also is vanity. ²⁰ So I turned about and gave my heart up to despair over all the toil of my labours under the sun, ²¹ because sometimes a person who has toiled with wisdom and knowledge and skill must leave everything to be enjoyed by someone who did not toil for it. This also is vanity and a great evil. ²² What has a man from all the toil and striving of heart with which he toils beneath the sun? ²³ For all his days are full of sorrow, and his work is a vexation. Even in the night his heart does not rest. This also is vanity.

Footnotes: a. The Hebrew term *hebel*, translated *vanity* or *vain*, refers concretely to a “mist,” “vapour,” or “mere breath,” and metaphorically to something that is fleeting or elusive (with different nuances depending on the context). It appears five times in this verse and in 29 other verses in Ecclesiastes. b. The Hebrew term denotes the centre of one’s inner life, including mind, will, and emotions. c. The Hebrew term *hebel* can refer to a “vapour” or “mere breath” (see note a.). d. or a *feeding on wind*; compare Hosea 12:1 (also in Ecclesiastes 1:17; 2:11, 17, 26; 4:4, 6, 16; 6:9)

COMMENT: Qoheleth, the teacher of Wisdom, known more by the Latin name of the book, Ecclesiastes, was the classical cynic of scripture. These selections from the beginning of his collection of wise sayings express that characterisation very well. Purporting to be Solomon, the son of David, he used this pseudonym to conceal his identity as a 4th century observer of Israel’s moral and spiritual decline during the latter part of the Persian period (539-333 BC). Qoheleth appears to be agnostic and fatalistic, which fits well with his affirmation of the existence and power of the LORD. This found expression in his oft repeated statement that “all is vanity and chasing after wind.” Qoheleth came to the conclusion that life did not have much meaning at all. As he said in 2:18-21, he despaired of his labours yielding anything from which he might benefit. Only others gained from what he had wrought. All one’s efforts yield only pain and vexation. As a result, he eschewed all but pleasure and felt that this too was the will of God (verses 24-25 not in this reading). He must have suffered from a prolonged depression or his times must have been exceedingly oppressive.

Luke 12:13-21 English Standard Version (ESV)

The Parable of the Rich Fool

12¹³ Someone in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.”¹⁴ But he said to him, “Man, who made me a judge or arbitrator over you?”¹⁵ And he said to them, “Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.”¹⁶ And he told them a parable, saying, “The land of a rich man produced plentifully,¹⁷ and he thought to himself, ‘What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?’¹⁸ And he said, ‘I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods.’¹⁹ And I will say to my soul, ‘Soul, you have

ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.”²⁰ But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’²¹ So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.”

COMMENT: A man was concerned with his inheritance (or lack of it), and asked Jesus to intervene. This became a moment of teaching about the false reliance on wealth. This episode from the Gospel of Luke reinforces the lesson of “seek his [God’s] kingdom, and these things will be added to you”, as found further on in this chapter (verse 31). This summary is borrowed from Matthew 6:3, given as “Seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and his righteousness and all these things will be added to you.” Note from the last verse of the passage that it is not wealth as such that is wrong, but how we see our wealth – money loaned to us by God for his work. It is not money that is the root of all kinds of evil, but the *love* of money! 1 Timothy 6:10.

Psalm 107 *Confitemini Domino* Grail Psalter

℟ O give thanks to the Lord for he is good, for his love had no end.

¹ “O give thanks to the Lord for he is good;
for his love endures for ever.” **℟**

² Let them say this, the Lord’s redeemed,
whom he redeemed from the hand of the foe

³ and gathered from far-off lands,
from east and west, north and south. **℟**

⁴ Some wandered in the desert, in the wilderness,
finding no way to a city they could dwell in.

⁵ Hungry they were and thirsty;
their soul was fainting within them. **℟**

⁶ Then they cried to the Lord in their need
and he rescued them from their distress

⁷ and he led them along the right way,
to reach a city they could dwell in. **℟**

⁸ Let them thank the Lord for his love,
for the wonders he does for men:

⁹ for he satisfies the thirsty soul;
he fills the hungry with good things.

℟ O give thanks to the Lord for he is good, for his love had no end.

⁴³ Whoever is wise, let him heed these things.
And consider the love of the Lord. **℟**

**Glory be to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit,
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,
world without end. Amen.**

COMMENT: This selection forms the first two antiphons of a litany of thanksgiving most likely created as a hymn for community worship at a relatively late date, no more than four or five centuries BC. Its antiphon chorus (verse 8 in this extract from the psalm, but also in verses 15, 21, and 31) celebrates God's enduring love on which all Israel's history depended.

Post Communion

Lord God, whose Son is the true vine and the source of life, ever giving himself that the world may live: may we so receive within ourselves the power of his death and passion that, in his saving cup, we may share his glory and be made perfect in his love; for he is alive and reigns, now and for ever. **Amen**

Blessing

God the Father, by whose glory Christ was raised from the dead, strengthen you to walk with him in his risen life; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among *you*, and remain with *you* always. **Amen.**